

PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

Editors: LAWRENCE DURRELL, IBRAHIM SHUKRALLAH, BERNARD SPENCER

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VOLUME 2

PART 1

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## IDEAS ABOUT POETRY : IV.

### SEVENTEEN PROPOSITIONS.

1. Imagination is not an emotional, but an intellectual, process.
- 1.0 1 By imagination I mean the conscious inward creation of realities, whether by formation or by analysis.
- 1.0 1 1 The entirely subjective is not real, but reality may transcend the objective : poetic reality *must* do so.
- 1.0 1 2 Self and its products are unreal in isolation, in only inward origin or existence.
- 1.1 By "intellectual" I intend all that is causal and logical; i. e. the (deliberately) rational as opposed to the instinctive or the unshaped.
2. Poetry is a medium, or an embodiment, of the imagination.
- 2.1 Poetry may arouse emotion and spring from emotion. But its creation, and its reception by the reader, are intellectual.
- 2.1 1 Subconscious roots and powers must exist; but it is not to these that poetry is directed, nor upon these that it rests. For poetry then would be chance.
- 2.1 1 1 The reader need not analyse; the writer must.
- 2.1 1 2 True poetry is never involuntary : either reader or writer must be a poet.
- 2.1 1 3 If the writer is a poet, he is fully aware of his intentions and of his effects—except the effects of incalculable private association in the reader : but these he must try to calculate and limit.
- 2.1 1 4 No poet *relies* on the incalculable.
- 2.1 1 5 The trappings of poetry (form, rhetoric, music, figure, and the rest) must be in and of the original imagination, or be hollow and meaningless.
- 2.2 Poetry's inception is the recognition of processes.
- 2.2 1 Poetry's reality, then, is the knowledge and calculation of effects.
- 2.2 2 No other process can make poetry. What is written otherwise, may be related to poetry; or is spurious; but cannot be poetry.
3. Poetry, NOT excepting music, is the most scientific of the arts.

T. R. T.

## ON FIRST LOOKING INTO LOEB'S

### HORACE.

I found your Horace with the writing in it;  
Out of time and context came upon  
This lover of vines and slave to quietness,  
Walking like a figure of smoke here, musing  
Among his high and lovely Tuscan pines.

All the small-holder's ambitions : the yield  
Of wine-bearing grape, pruning and drainage  
Laid out by laws, almost like the austere  
Shell of his verses—a pattern of Latin thrift;  
Waiting so patiently in a library for  
Autumn and the drying of the apples;  
The betraying hour-glass and its deathward drift.

Surely the hard blue winterset  
Must have conveyed a message to him—  
The premonitions that the garden heard  
Shrunk in its shirt of hair beneath the stars,  
How rude and feeble a tenant was the self,  
An Empire, the body with its members dying —  
And unwhistling now the vanished Roman bird?

The fruit-trees dropping apples; he counted them;  
The soft bounding fruit on leafy terraces,  
And turned to the consoling winter rooms  
Where, facing south, began the great prayer,  
With his reed laid upon the margins  
Of the dead, his stainless authors,  
Upright, severe on an uncomfortable chair.

Here, where your clear hand marked up  
"The hated cypress" I added "Because it grew  
On tombs, revealed his fear of autumn and the urns",

Depicting a solitary at an upper window  
Revising metaphors for the winter sea : "O  
Dark head of storm-tossed curls"; or silently  
Watching the North Star which like a fever burns

Away the envy and neglect of the common,  
Shining on this terrace, lifting up in recreation  
The sad heart of Horace who must have seen it only  
As a metaphor for the self and its perfection—  
A burning heart quite constant in its station.

Easy to be patient in the summer,  
The light running like fishes among the leaves,  
Easy in August with its cones of blue  
Sky uninvaded from the north; but winter  
With its bareness pared his words to points  
Like stars, leaving them pure but very few.

He will not know how we discerned him, disregarding  
The pose of sufficiency, the landed man,  
Found a suffering limb on the great Latin tree  
Whose roots live in the barbarian grammar we  
Use, yet based in him, his mason's tongue;  
Describing clearly a bachelor, sedentary,  
With a fond weakness for bronze-age conversation,  
Disguising a sense of failure in a hatred for the young

Who built in the Sabine hills this forgery  
Of completeness, an orchard with a view of Rome;  
Who studiously developed his sense of death  
Till it was all around him, walking at the circus,  
At the baths, playing dominoes in a shop—  
The escape from self-knowledge with its tragic  
Imperatives : *Seek, suffer, endure*. The Roman  
In him feared the Law and told him where to stop.

So perfect a disguise for one who had  
Exhausted death in art—yet who could guess  
You would discern the liar by a line;



The suffering hidden under gentleness  
And add upon the flyleaf in your tall  
Clear hand : "Fat, human and unloved,  
And held from loving by a sort of wall,  
Laid down his books and lovers one by one ;  
Indifference and success had crowned them all."

Lawrence DURRELL.

### MYTHOLOGY.

All my favourite characters have been  
Out of all pattern and proportion ;  
Some living in villas by railways,  
Some like Katsimbali heard but seldom seen,  
And others in banks whose sunless hands  
Moved like great rats on ledgers . . .

Tibble, Gondril, Purvis, the Duke of Puke,  
Shatterblossom and Dude Bowdler  
Who swelled up in Jaffa and became a tree,  
Hollis who had wives killed under him like horses  
And that man of destiny

Ramon de something who gave lectures  
From an elephant ; founded a society  
To protect the inanimate against cruelty.  
He gave asylum to aged chairs in his home,  
Lamposts and crockery, everything that  
Seemed to him suffering he took in  
Without mockery.

The poetry was in the pity. No judgement  
Disturbs people like these in their frames  
O men of the Marmion class, sons of the free.

Lawrence DURRELL.

### TO A LATE COMPOSER.

Every day another reception and garlands of rhetoric over a tomb.  
This man taught the nation nothing, planted no deserts with pylons.  
We remnants are enriched, but his friends and family were impoverished  
Slander arrested him in kennels of aphrodisiac and hashish

But beams make tears of what they play on. He filled ears and throat  
With the turmoil of his presence first, then with his still quiet.  
Unthought stresses of voice and instrument replaneted his firmament  
Beyond the mason on the site he built for duration  
Set for perpetuity more than the seedsman, explored properties  
Rare in the luckiest tendril or the talented stone.

The sands were dry and ready for the fall.  
An Alexandrian nightingale with a sky-nest  
Lighted on the shore from a dark flowering hill  
He chose where only the kites circled in a cleft  
An hour when the food-gatherers were away busy  
He chose to struggle with the two horizons  
And alert as a parrot he intercepted  
The surprise of the world's shouts and whispers.

A frenzy in the sands was fretting  
For his harangues and elegiac speech  
For soliloquies on the reed  
And sighs which through gaping notches  
Achieve the slopes and parapets  
In continents of the pure dead.



The house of earth was opened, down its corridors of art  
Consolation was blown from the cool belts. And do not lament  
For art. There is always nourishment streaming in the crevices of air,  
The calendar's quickening restores the corpses, and the meteors  
In the shafts of Karnak make bonfires among the pillars  
And what washes through Egypt is tired and brilliant as wax.

Said, the master, relaxed : the end of his blaze was disaster.  
He quitted his disquiet, even the random and epileptic  
Revelations, by which he committed more monuments to us  
Than legions have left banners in this sand.

Still in the lay kingdom chants a boy,  
Frail as bamboo, pink with tossing  
The ball of twine that cradles space

He clings to the suburbs, restless, locking his hands  
— And the premise of art is an alabaster blush.

*Paraphrased from the Arabic of Shawqy by Herbert HOWARTH and Ibrahim  
SHUKRALLAH.*

#### DEAD SEA PLAGUE.

Where once Lot's wife looked back in horror  
To see God's judgement blast Gomorrah  
Today the Sodom sunshine blisters  
Queen Alexandra's Nursing sisters.

Robert LIDDELL.

## THE HARVEST IN THE MIDDLE SEA.

(for C. S. P.)

Distantly, by navigator's calculation  
Pinpointing rock in the waters, the target  
Mistily seen through the panels of air's dimension.  
A point or so to starboard. Thats there all right :  
The expected, our landfall, Malta.

Look! Malta spun on the sea, shaping to sight  
Fragilely as a promise, framed by metal  
And the deft cunning of airmanship.  
Nudge, nod : thats there all right. A petal  
Yellow, all veined with green in the sea's hard  
Flooring of other element, of timeless running.  
Malta, outposted, cactus, nettle—  
Leafed on the blood-invested water, prickle, guard.

Fly in to circuit the runways, scarred  
And scored sparsely on land hard-won,  
Levelled amid ridges, walls like wrinkles  
In ancient faces sweetened by the sun.  
From lofts of air, hover over the stones  
Fashioned and catacombed, lidding the eye that twinkles  
And watches with Phoenician patience over the years.  
Casting the count of nations' dust and bones.  
Not much of a size, this rock. Some nine by seventeen.  
O witness to the Mediterranean glory, to the tears,  
And the learning and the swagger. All watched : all seen.

Now circuit once the sallow veined-with-green  
Pale rock, pale buidled block, flushed dome and steeple,  
Bleached monuments of saints, dark dappled lemon groves,  
The gentlemanly manners of baroque,  
And the jet patient shadows on the roads of people :  
By St Paul guided, by the stone folds of bastions guarded,  
Tillers, artificers, minders of scanty droves,  
So little needed new, so much less old discarded,  
In poor tilth found, in timeless age provided.  
Wheels down : full flaps : and glide to ground.  
Phoenician-eyed, these saw Carthage and Rome,  
Greeks, Infidels and Normans in their humours :  
Nor shall we rouse them with an engine's sound  
Upon the ruthless skyline of an aerodrome.

Death is our mission and, at the long last, home,  
Unshadowed by the killing, by the festering wrong.  
Unawed by glory or mice-whispers of fear.  
Home we desire, and the most of us, young, armed, strong,  
With these weapons proving and older integrity,  
No bolder for death being near.

Watch the old eyes, now, like the clang of a bell  
In your sleep or the sirens of an alert  
Deep in your body's keep of silence. Watch them well :  
These work hard, these peasants, scratching at dirt,  
And take little notice of flying. Older, stranger  
One here saw Carthage dying, lying under the plough ;  
One here saw Tyrian Astoreth quenchless fall ;  
One here saw Rome in danger ;  
One stumbled, knelt at the shipwreck of St Paul.

Jack Airman, at leisure now, no avenger,  
With a whatsyours and an ardent popsy reclining



On fancy's cushion, no killing  
To ward off happiness, no challenger shining  
High-riding, full-witted, willing.  
The mission is death. All your lining  
And delicate armoury saves you whole  
From the too-dear erosion, love or friendship,  
From the parting, the too-long lingering, the confusion  
Of grief and loving life. No toll  
Ever was taken but here these eyes looked on,  
And the waters bubbled with blood and oil.  
Death blooms in Mediterranean profusion :  
We are old where nothing is new, now, Airman John.

Zeppu easily leans against the soil,  
Against where airscrews, airelons' pattern throws  
An emblem on the light of evening. Easily  
Moves man and plough in meagreness, furrows  
Watered, terraced by dark hands' husbandry.  
Not all by Saints and Powers, Zeppu knows  
—Its wonderful what people will believe—  
How night or death assemble in the light,  
How this year's bean crop bloom or blemish, how the rose  
Most precious birth-rose in a bowl of water, fade and grieve.

Not many of them killed, considering. Just those  
By law of average. Zeppu will forget  
And Grez, barefooted, carrying her shoes,  
Will pray for some till harvest. If we set  
A time and limit to our fear. A time to choose;  
A limit for the body's chance against the force  
Of bombardment by thought and deed and thought :  
We might be bold with the old eyes. We might not lose  
Our singleness for the fear of being caught.

So they trampled the Three Cities about the port,  
And Valletta built by gentlemen for gentlemen, and the quays  
And the garnished churches, and the alleys of stairs  
Where noble quarterings passed which could not be bought,  
And rooms where parchments faded with the family trees.  
Now the blasted limestone of the little houses  
Clogs the proud prospects, stumbles on to squares :  
Wind in an elegiac chandelier carouses :  
A brocaded remnant curdles upon the breeze.  
Knights, galley slaves, middlemen, pimps, corsairs  
Contributed dust to dust, the yellow volley to heaven,  
The must and reek of smoke that pillared and settled  
Over the old waters, blood invested, unawares.

No more the young man's hunger for the marvellous seas  
Or air's white stairs and extremes is set and sealed  
By sixteen knightly quarterings, tempered and mettled,  
By the gilt character upon the azure field.  
I see the legion of common men inherit  
The rubble, the grandeur of the arches and the shield  
Of sight in the abysses, of St John, of lightning  
In the righteous sky. Nor is there merit,  
Vouched by the old eye which ever perishes,  
Except in faith, by friends, by love, by country,  
Cleansing and firing and brightening.

A lunar knife embellishes.  
The old Renaissance fever burns  
Its character of ice and gold on palaces.  
Midnight so rare and bountiful returns;  
Equally carving the knightly emblem,  
The cross and the shield with light,

Describing the pattern of the chasm  
Or the strangled flight,  
Printed on air, by the maimed balustrade;  
Mercifully glossing cratered hearts with shade.

The mission is death. There is no shorter, longer  
Entry over the old water where the sorry and the afraid  
Are comfortable. There is no city,  
Airman John, where, in a chromium logic, man is stronger  
Than man. There is no release from pity,  
That skewer at the heart. There is soil the foot treads after  
The high flying, the expert precision in space,  
The careful briefing, the dicing, the laughter.  
In the blast rubble, and the beauty and ruin of the place.  
An eye, hot, living, looks from a secret face.

We will fly away one day  
And get us back to our homes and to the grace  
Of tenderness, the sap which moves in the wood,  
The balance of the head upon the daffodil,  
The truth which was understood  
In our indeterminate passion,  
In the Saturday street or under the hill.  
In our own fashion  
We will be at peace and be still.  
Jack Airman, if there be destiny for good  
Among us, you have the power, the prowess, navigator's skill.  
We will fly away one day with no need to kill.

John Pudney.



BEGGAR.

Old as a coat on a chair; and his crushed hand,  
as unexpressive as a bird's face, held  
out like an offering, symbol of the blind,  
he gropes our noise for charity. You could build  
his long-deserted face up out of sand,  
or bear his weakness as a child.

Shuffling the seconds of a drugged watch, he  
attends no answer to his rote; for soul's  
and body's terrible humility,  
stripped year by year a little barer, wills  
nothing : he claims no selfhood in his cry :  
his body is an age that feels.

As if a mask, a tattered blanket, should  
live for a little before falling, when  
the body leaves it : so briefly in his dead  
feathers of rags, and rags of body, and in  
his crumpled mind, the awful and afraid  
stirs and pretends to be a man.

Earth's degradation and the voice of earth;  
colour of earth and clothed in it; his eyes  
white pebbles blind with deserts; the long growth  
of landscape in his body : as if these  
or these dead acres horribly gave birth :  
*here* will fall from him like disguise.

Only a sad and humble motion keeps  
the little space he is, himself : to row  
his mindless caves with ritual hand and lips,  
and wonder dimly at his guilt : with no  
memory of it now : it was perhaps  
too fearful, or too long ago.

Terence TILLER.

IMAGE IN A LILAC TREE.

Tireless budding and flowering of women  
to a child and a child ; the closed evening-care  
of motherhood : from what slim boughs the lilac  
swells into lavender torches, the flesh  
          blossoms through its leaves !

Or now the heart is heavy and sweet with words,  
and a great wind sways the tongue : oh eloquence  
of gardens bursting through the narrow pen  
into five senses, that clutch beauty as  
          a child the breast !

The lilac's evening-coloured breasts of smoke,  
bare like a Cretan lady's to the firm  
poetic moonlight : love, conception, birth,  
where the five tongues of living drink, and are  
          poem and image.

Terence TILLER.

## BEHAVIOUR OF MONEY.

Money was once well known, like a townhall or the sky  
or a river East and West, and you lived one side or the other;  
Love and Death dealt shocks,  
but for all the money that passed, the wise man knew his brother.

But money changed. Money came jerking roughly alive;  
went battering round the town with a boozy, zigzag tread.  
A clear case for arrest;  
and the crowds milled and killed for the pound notes that he shed.

And the town changed, and the mean and the little lovers of gain  
inflated like a dropsy, and gone were the courtesies  
that eased the market day;  
saying, "buyer" and "seller" was saying, "enemies"

The poor were shunted nearer to beasts. The cops recruited.  
The rich became a foreign community. Up there leaped  
quiet folk gone nasty,  
quite strangely distorted, like a photograph that has slipped.

Hearing the drunken roars of Money from down the street,  
"What's to become of us?" the people in bed would cry :  
"And oh, the thought strikes chill;  
what's to become of the world if Money should suddenly die?

Should suddenly take a toss and go down crack on his head?  
If the dance suddenly finished, if they stopped the runaway bus,  
if the trees stopped racing away?  
If our hopes come true and he dies, what's to become of us?

Shall we recognise each other, crowding around the body?  
And as we go stealing off in search of the town we have known  
—what a job for the Sanitary Officials;  
the sprawled body of Money, dead, stinking, alone!"



Will X contrive to lose the weasel look in his eyes?  
Will the metal go out of the voice of Y? Shall we all turn back  
to men, like Circe's beasts?  
Or die? Or dance in the street the day that the world goes crack?

Bernard SPENCER.

‘PASSED OVER’.

Some of his messages were personal  
almost as his lost face; they showed he knew  
about their pets, the life that went on beating  
in desks and scrapbooks, what he used to call

visitors and uncles : the young engineer,  
who had put khaki on and died in the mud,  
at times would almost touch them.

Somehow was  
also the sing-song spirit-gospeller;

the irrelevance, the baby-talk and spout  
of ‘Vera’, the Control; and stagey things,  
a bell, a violin, an Indian chief;  
even rough horseplay, crashing a table about.

But then he was their son. That love, that birth  
made the old couple blind enough to bear  
the medium's welcome, taking no offence,  
and haunt his room that opened clean off earth.

Bernard SPENCER.

DESERT FLOWERS.

Living in a wide landscape are the flowers  
Rosenberg I only repeat what you were saying  
the shell and the hawk every hour  
are slaying men and jerboas, slaying

the mind but the body can fill  
the hungry flowers and the dogs who cry words  
at nights, the most hostile things of all.  
But that is not new. Each time the night discards

draperies on the eyes and leaves the mind awake  
I look each side of the door of sleep

for the little coin it will take  
to buy the secret I shall not keep.

I see men as trees suffering  
or confound the detail and the horizon.  
Lay the coin on my tongue and I will sing  
of what the others never set eyes on.

Keith DOUGLAS.

## THE DEATH OF THE MOTHER YUGOVITCH.

Dear God, what a strange, enormous marvel,  
When the army joined on Kosovo!  
In that army the nine Yugovitch brothers  
And the tenth, the old Yug Bogdan.  
And the Yugovitch mother prayed to God,  
That God give her the eyes of a falcon  
And the white wings of a swan  
To fly to the plain of Kosovo  
To see her nine Yugovitch sons  
And the tenth, her old Yug Bogdan.

So God gave her the eyes of a falcon  
And the white wings of a swan.  
She flew to the plain of Kosovo,  
And found them dead,—her nine Yugovitch sons  
And the tenth, her old Yug Bogdan.  
And near them lay nine battle spears,  
And on the battle spears nine falcons,  
And near the spears were nine good chargers,  
And near them nine furious hounds.  
She heard the neighing of the nine good chargers,  
And the baying of the nine furious hounds,  
And the screeching of the nine falcons.  
But here the mother's heart was hard,  
And from her heart she did not loose her tears.  
But she took the nine good chargers,  
And she took the nine furious hounds,  
And she took the nine falcons,  
And she returned to her own white halls.

From far the daughters saw her;  
They walked a little nearer towards her.  
There was the wailing of the nine widows,



There was the weeping of the nine orphans,  
There was the neighing of the nine good chargers,  
There was the baying of the nine furious hounds,  
There was the screeching of the nine falcons.  
But here the mother's heart was hard,  
And from her heart she did not loose her tears.  
But she consoled the nine widows,  
"Do not let madness come, my daughters,  
But thank God for his gift.  
These sons that I bore in my youth,  
They were not born to lie on feathered pillows,  
But to defend the land from the foe. . .  
So do not weep my dear, dear daughters.  
If the cranes have flown away,  
Their young brood stays with us;  
We will feed the young cranes.  
Our seed shall never perish,  
Nor shall our halls remain desolate."

When it was midnight of the night,  
They heard the neighing of their Damyon's roan.  
The mother heard and questioned Damyon's wife,  
"My daughter, the darling of my Damyon,  
What means this neighing of our Damyon's roan?  
Is he hungry for his white wheat grain,  
Or thirsty for water from the well at Zvechan?  
And Damyon's darling answered her,  
"My mother, the mother of my Damyon,  
He is not hungry for his white wheat grain,  
Nor thirsty for water from the well at Zvechan.  
But Damyon taught him this,  
—To nibble his oats until the hour of midnight,  
And after midnight to canter along the road.  
So he is grieving for his master,  
Grieving because he is not carrying him."  
And here the mother's heart was hard,  
And from her heart she did not loose her tears.

But in the morning when the daybreak dawned,  
Two black ravens flew down,  
Their wings all bloodied over,  
And white froth tearing at their beaks.  
They bore the arm of the hero;  
On one finger was a golden ring.  
They dropped the arm into the lap of the mother.  
The Yugovitch mother took the arm;  
She moved it round, she turned it round and round,  
And called to Damyon's wife,  
"My daughter, the darling of my Damyon,  
Do you know whose arm this is?"  
And the wife of Damyon answered,  
"This is the arm of our dear Damyon;  
For I know this ring,  
The ring that I wore on our wedding day."

The mother took the arm of Damyon,  
She moved it round, she turned it round and round.  
She whispered fondly to the arm,  
"My arm, my bright green apple,  
Where did you grow, and where were you torn off?  
You grew in my womb,  
You were torn off on Kosovo plain".  
And now the mother could not bear her grief,  
So great her mother's sorrow,  
That her live heart broke with grieving  
For her nine Yugovitch sons,  
And for the tenth, her old Yug Bogdan.

*Translated from the Serbo-Croat by Dorian COOKE.*